



The Jewish Medical Tradition: From the Bible to the Recent Past

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Course Description

How many of us have wondered why so many Jews have pursued careers in medicine? This course begins with a search for answers to that common question. We will address a variety of factors that have led to millennia of significant Jewish involvement in medical practice. We will consider, for example, the roles of religion, politics, and economics, through discussion of both famous (e.g., Maimonides and Freud) and lesser-known historical figures. We will also look beyond individuals to consider how diseases and specialties have come to be labelled “Jewish,” and we will examine Jewish doctors’ confrontation with, and responses to, prejudice.

Learning Objectives

1. Identify factors that led to a significant presence of Jews in medicine
2. Recognize the many understandings of “Jewish” in connection with this history
3. Situate the heritage of Cedars-Sinai and its Jewish doctors in the larger narrative of Jews in medicine

Course Topics and Readings

Week 1: Medicine and Healing in Jewish Religious Texts

Guest Lecture: Rabbi Dr. Jason Weiner, BCC, Director, Spiritual Care Dept., Cedars-Sinai Medical Center

Readings: Selections from religious texts

Week 2: Why were/are there so many Jewish physicians?

Readings: Selections from J. Efron, *Medicine and the German Jews: A History* (2001); selections from M. Nevins, *The Jewish Doctor: A Narrative History* (1996)

Week 3: Incidentally Jewish Doctors

Readings: Selections from personal accounts; biographical sketches

Week 4: Decidedly Jewish Doctors

Readings: Selections from personal accounts; biographical sketches

Week 5: “Jewish” Diseases and “Jewish” Specialties

Readings: Selections from K. Wailoo and S. Pemberton, *The Troubled Dream of Genetic Medicine: Ethnicity and Innovation in Tay-Sachs, Cystic Fibrosis, and Sickle Cell Disease* (2007)

Week 6: Confronting Prejudice within the Medical Profession

Guest Lecture: Rabbi Dr. Jason Weiner, BCC, Director, Spiritual Care Dept., Cedars-Sinai Medical Center

Readings: Selections from A. Kraut and D. Kraut, *Covenant of Care: Newark Beth Israel and the Jewish Hospital in America* (2007); N. Aleksion, “Christian Corpses for Christians!: Dissecting the Anti-Semitism behind the Cadaver Affair of the Second Polish Republic,” *East European Politics and Societies* (2011)

[Syllabus subject to change]